

United Nations



Daily Highlights

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W E D N E S D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

- + Security Council, in Presidential statement last night, says it will consider whether a situation threatens international peace and security when deciding on creation of peace-keeping operation; will also consider if clear political goal can be reflected in precise mandate.
- + Secretary-General recommends that General Assembly extend mandate of United Nations component of MICIVIH, citing deteriorating human rights situation in Haiti; says Haitian parties must make concessions in order to resolve situation.
- + High Commissioner for Human Rights to visit Rwanda with view to tackling country's "human rights disaster"; United Nations Legal Counsel says ethnic killings there amount to genocide.
- + Secretary-General welcomes signing of agreement by Israel and PLO in Cairo today; says action is major step towards implementing Declaration of Principles and advances cause of peace in Middle East.
- + Saudi Arabia contributes \$20 million to support UNRWA's Peace Implementation Programme in West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- + IAEA circulates draft convention on safety of nuclear power plants for adoption in Vienna next month.

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In deciding on the establishment of a peace-keeping operation, it is necessary to consider whether there is a threat to international peace and security, according to the Security Council. In a statement read out last night by its President, Ibrahim A. Gambari (Nigeria), the Council said it was also important to consider whether there was a clear political goal which could be reflected in a precise mandate. The Council was responding to the Secretary-General's report on "Improving the capacity of the United Nations for peace-keeping."

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The Council said it would also consider whether regional arrangements could help in resolving the situation; the existence of a cease-fire; the parties' commitment to a peace process; and the possibility of ensuring the safety of United Nations personnel. The Council went on to say that it should receive cost projections for the start-up and first six months of an operation, as well as for any increase in total peace-keeping spending, and should be informed of the availability of resources for the operation.

It was important for troop contributors to meet with Council members and for Special Representatives or Force Commanders to provide regular briefings on operations, the Council said. It noted the Secretary-General's intention to devise stand-by arrangements for peace-keeping operations, and encouraged him to continue efforts to include civilian personnel in those arrangements. The Council stressed that peace-keeping operations should be under the operational control of the United Nations, and welcomed the General Assembly's call for urgent action on the question of command and control.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has recommended that the General Assembly extend the mandate and financing of the United Nations component of the International Civilian Mission in Haiti (MICIVIH) for one year. In a report to the Assembly dated 29 April, he said that although the Mission had been unable to resolve the situation in Haiti, it had shed light on certain events there and denounced human rights abuses that would not otherwise have been disclosed.

The Secretary-General went on to say that President Jean-Bertrand Aristide could only be returned to power, and democracy restored to Haiti, if the parties there made constructive concessions. He noted that current negotiations had yielded no significant progress. A recent initiative by a group of Haitian Parliamentarians -- which had been supported by the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS) -- had not been endorsed by President Aristide. Meanwhile, unity among the Friends of the Secretary-General on Haiti had waned and Security Council sanctions had proved ineffective.

The Secretary-General said the international community's role had changed from that of mediator between the parties to that of sole agent responsible for resolving the situation in Haiti. There was a danger that the international community would have too extensive a mission, allowing the parties to shirk their own responsibilities. He stressed the need for "a more specifically Haitian solution," and said the other countries directly concerned should restore a unified approach in the current negotiations. Without positive change by both the Haitian side and the international community, it was difficult for the United Nations to determine what additional efforts were needed. However, the Organization must maintain its presence in Haiti given the deteriorating human rights situation there, he concluded.

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Jose Ayala Lasso, has announced that he will visit Rwanda in the next few days to find ways to end the "human rights disaster" there. He will also visit Burundi to offer continued United Nations support to that country. He said that he would ask members of the Commission for Human Rights to convene an emergency session to deal with the situation in Rwanda, and that he was considering sending human rights monitors there. Mr. Lasso met today in Geneva with Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to discuss his forthcoming mission.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Legal Counsel, Ralph Zacklin, has said that the killings in Rwanda amount to genocide. In remarks to correspondents at Headquarters today, he noted that the Convention on Genocide defined the crime as killing with the intention to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. He also noted that the Security Council's recent Presidential statement on Rwanda contained a definition of genocide, even though the word itself had not been used.

Mr. Zacklin said persons could be tried for genocide in the national courts of States parties to the Genocide Convention. However, there was no permanent international criminal tribunal which could claim jurisdiction over what was happening in Rwanda. Nevertheless, genocide was recognized as a crime under customary international law and Member States could ask the United Nations to establish a special tribunal in response to the killings there.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has welcomed the agreement signed today in Cairo by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). He congratulated them for taking the first major step in implementing the Declaration of Principles and urged them to continue their negotiations. The Secretary-General, who was continuing his visit to Geneva, said the agreement brought the two parties closer to the goal of peace in the Middle East.

The Secretary-General paid tribute to the United States and the Russian Federation as co-sponsors of the Gaza-Jericho accord, as well as to Egypt and Norway. He also appealed to the international community to fulfill its commitments in support of the Declaration of Principles, particularly by providing necessary financial assistance.

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Saudi Arabia yesterday contributed \$20 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to support projects in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The projects are part of UNRWA's Peace Implementation Programme, which was launched after the signing of the Declaration of Principles between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel last September.

Saudi Arabia's contribution will support the construction of schools and health facilities, the provision of equipment for Shifa hospital, and the rehabilitation of shelters in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The country is a

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major donor to UNRWA and contributes \$1.2 million to its regular programmes each year."

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A draft nuclear safety convention has been circulated to all States by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for adoption at a Diplomatic Conference to be held at IAEA Headquarters in Vienna from 14 to 17 June. The draft, which has been drawn up in a series of meetings since 1991, covers land-based civil nuclear power plants.

Adoption of the draft convention will help maximize safety at the world's 420 nuclear power plants, according to the IAEA. The obligations contained in it are based on fundamental safety principles reflecting a consensus on the regulation and operation of nuclear installations. Contracting parties will also be obliged to submit reports on implementation for "peer review" at regular meetings.

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South Africa has recovered all the rights and privileges of full membership of the World Health Organization (WHO) as a result of a resolution adopted by the World Health Assembly in Geneva yesterday. That resolution noted the recent democratic elections in South Africa and the coming into force of the country's new Constitution.

South Africa lost its voting privileges as a result of a World Health Assembly resolution adopted in 1964. That resolution said the country's system of apartheid represented a failure to adhere to the WHO's humanitarian principles.

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